

relations to the Confederation of the Provinces not to be struck by two remarkable peculiarities—namely: 1st. The reticence, or rather the entire absence of fixed views and intentions on the subject of Education in the explanations of those politicians who have propounded to the public the plan of a confederation, and 2nd. The excitement and apprehensions of gentlemen in other parts of Lower Canada, who, like the majority of members of this Association are Protestants.

As regards the former of these two points I think it is a fortunate thing for us teachers that the views and intentions of our political guides are thus as it were, held in suspense—that they have not already committed themselves to any definite policy in regard to alterations in Educational arrangements—that the door is thus purposely left open for us or any persons practically interested in Educational concerns to bring forward our own proposals and suggestions—and that, finally, they thus disclaim, as it were, all desire to deal with things of such vital consequence upon the same footing as they would dispose of matters of debt and revenue, imports and exports, commerce and shipping.

I do not know if other teachers felt as I did in noticing the utter meagreness of the programme in regard to future educational arrangements, for I presumed to feel annoyed and was inclined to quarrel with the whole scheme on that account. But on reflection I saw that it was proper if not necessary, and I now believe it to have been for us and our great cause the very best thing that could have happened under the circumstances.

Upon the second point to which I have adverted, namely the apprehensions of friends of education in some other parts of Lower Canada, I shall honestly express my own convictions at the risk of appearing to some, whose good opinion I value, to be uninfluenced by a proper zeal.

When I read those discussions in the public prints and the proposals which have been circulated by the Committee of the Protestant Association in Montreal, I was led to revise for myself, and to think over, as well as the brief time and other opportunities allowed, the whole system and machinery whereby public education in Lower Canada is now governed and carried on. The public acts containing the substance of the whole are those of 1846, 1848 and 1856, especially those of the last named year. Having carefully read these, having examined the Statutes for calling into existence and regulating Boards of Examiners, Model Schools, Normal Schools, Council of Public Instruction, Journal of Education, Inspectorships, protecting teachers in their individual rights and privileges, Pensioning Superannuated Teachers, and Annual Reports as well as other leading features of the system now established in Lower Canada, together with the various provisions for rectifying abuses as they occur, and for enforcing the educational laws generally,—and taking into account the steady progress which I confidently affirm has characterized the state of Education in our country and district, I feel bound to express my conviction that in all essentials a great and excellent foundation has already been laid for the future educational welfare of our people whether Protestants or Catholics. And I feel bound also to add my decided opinion that the less the existing arrangements and provisions be meddled with in the way of alterations or additions, the better, even in view of our plunging ere long into that greater sphere of national existence disclosed to us in the prospect of a Confederation of all the British North American Provinces.

As regards teachers themselves, our system both in theory and in practice makes us a profession and gives us all a status as belonging to such, the same as has long since been accorded by society to the practitioners of Law and Medicine. This is to us and in the interest of education a matter of the greatest possible moment, and is an advantage not yet fully attained though long striven for even in England, where the great mass of Teachers of the people do not yet, either in their own estimation or in the public eye, constitute a regular profession. The one thing needful for us as teachers is really to seek by all means in our power to qualify ourselves properly for the requirements of our calling—a thing that rests very much with ourselves and certain to bring along with its accomplishment the respect and support of Society in our behalf.

I do not presume to say that our system is without defects of detail. Intelligent and candid examination, combined with experience no less than censoriousness and capriciousness, can and do bring under notice various minor defects and desiderata. At the same time, it is my conscientious belief that all such as are of any great moment admit of gradual extinction and remedy, and that they will disappear from the system as the country advances in material prosperity and our machinery of education works on into an older state of existence.

Under these circumstances, and entertaining such belief as has been expressed, I for one, cannot concur in the necessity or advisability of having added on to our existing machinery (as proposed by the Committee already mentioned) a separate educational department for the Protestant population, to include another council of public instruction, as well as other reduplications of the parts of our present working system. The very suggestion itself is a complimentary acknowledgement of the capabilities of existing arrangements, but it is not put forth with that view, and is obviously intended to form our security against possible future oppression of one section of our population by another in educational matters.

According to my view of the probable results of such a large and costly addition to our present arrangements, collision of feelings and

interests in educational matters would become far more frequent and far more serious than they can be under a single department. Unity in educational effort, mutual liberality of thought and action in regard to each other's creeds and prejudices, and the amalgamation of the whole people which, however distant it may now seem to some, is yet to be desired and hoped for, and will surely come here, as it has elsewhere, in God's own good time, will, as I think, be absolutely and indefinitely deferred by thus virtually legislating for their postponement.

Surely, if we need further securities in behalf of our Protestant principles and aspirations, if we must demand stronger pledges than we already possess in the knowledge that the laws of our land will be executed on British soil, where we live and thrive under the glorious old British flag which protects us under its folds, Protestant and Catholic alike, as well as the members of every religious body, we should act more judiciously, if we rather contented ourselves with asking for some slight extension of facilities already enjoyed in connection with the existing Boards—say, for example, that the members of the Council of Public Instruction were augmented from 15 to 21, and that one-third should be Protestants; and that every district where there were Protestant children and Protestant schools should be open to the official visits of a Protestant Inspector.

But in truth the objection which to my mind appears strongest of all against the creation of another totally distinct department, as proposed, consists in this (which appears to me incontrovertible), that we have already organization elaborate and extensive enough for us to support. We cannot afford to pay more than we do for mere organization, seeing that the means attainable for the various educational necessities of our system are really insufficient to meet all the requirements for carrying on the work. If more money can be had and set apart for future educational purposes, let it rather be appropriated in supplying acknowledged wants than employed in setting up an opposition educational bureau, the want of which is, at least, not matter of actual experience. Moreover, it does seem to me to be something of the nature of an unwarrantable assumption to base our legislation on the idea that the head of the educational department in this country, as well as other principal officials, must always be of only the one religious persuasion. Generally, we may suppose, these will be men of the same faith as the great bulk of the population; but as there is no law to the contrary, and as superior fitness for the office cannot in reason always appertain to one of any particular creed, surely from time to time, when a vacancy occurs, and when it happens that the most highly qualified candidates are Protestants, a Protestant will stand a good chance of being appointed. I take it that in a mixed population such as ours must continue to be for generations to come, the influence of the not inconsiderable ratio which the number of Protestants will always bear to that of the majority of another faith, will surely be recognized and felt in some such way as indicated above.

I regret to differ, in regard to this important point, from those who have advocated the creation of a second educational department: but supposing we were all agreed to make the demand, and that it were accorded, then, I fear, the differences amongst the various denominations of Protestants themselves might eventually exceed in their influence upon the well-being of education, any that can possibly arise between Protestants as a whole and the Catholics, so that the principle being carried out into its legitimate consequences, we should hereafter have to provide new separate departments for the several leading and more numerous denominations of Protestants, and thus infinitely impede the cause of true education by rendering a vigorous unity of action impossible.

Are we then to take no advantage of the position in which we are now placed? Have we no demands to make, no securities to ask in our behalf and in behalf of education under the new constitution?

I cannot presume to offer suggestions in reply to such questions as these, except as affecting only or principally our own district of St. Francis. I think indeed it would be a great thing and not out of place to be legislated for now, if our statesmen would contemplate doing that for Lower Canada which has been so beneficially done for the perpetual maintenance of education in several States of the American Union and also in Upper Canada, viz., to assign some portion of the public domain for that great object. But it appears that in Lower Canada there is now no source in shape of available and marketable territory that could be thus assigned. Might we not then ask, instead of that, for an appropriation in money, whether in one block sum to be founded, or a sufficient annual grant to provide for the efficient maintenance and working of our present system? As regards the future of education in this extensive and flourishing district, destined hereafter to be the seat of a numerous agricultural, manufacturing and mining population, I have long been of opinion that the establishment of another Normal School for the instruction and training of teachers would prove of eminent service to the country and to Protestants in particular, if located somewhere near the centre of the Eastern Townships.

I shall not trouble the meeting with arguments on this subject, as I am aware that the idea is not a new one amongst us; but I am satisfied that it would prove a most acceptable boon to the great bulk of our country teachers and of our country population, and it is a fact that very few indeed of the teachers who come before the country boards of examiners for their diplomas have been able to avail themselves of the opportunities offered in the normal schools of Quebec and Montreal. If